



Emergency Management **UPDATE**

October 2002

Virginia Corps seeks citizen involvement in public safety

By Bob Lambert, Staff Writer

When Gov. Mark R. Warner announced his Virginia Corps volunteerism initiative last month, he spoke as a long-time activist and supporter of community service.

Before entering public life, Warner founded the Virginia Health Care Foundation to improve access to primary health care across the state.

He also helped launch "Senior Navigators" to aid senior citizens and their families in obtaining needed services and worked with faith-based organizations in establishing "Tech Riders," which uses volunteers in houses of worship to teach basic computing skills.

With Virginia Corps, Warner seeks to build on the renewed spirit of volunteerism and community preparedness awakened after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The program is expected to usher in a new era of citizen involvement by serving as a central clearinghouse for volunteer opportunities across the Commonwealth.

"We are determined to better prepare neighborhoods and families for emergencies like the one we experienced last year," the governor said.

"Through Virginia Corps, we want to empower citizens to help their neighbors in the event of any type of emergency — whether caused by terrorism, severe weather or technological disasters."

Virginia Corps works on two levels. First, it matches citizens who want to volunteer with service opportunities in their communities.

Using a Web-based program, citizens can type in their ZIP code and areas of volunteer interest on the Virginia Corps Web site (www.virginiacorps.org) and get a listing of local volunteer opportunities.

Virginia Corps programs

- **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** — Trains individuals/communities to take a more active role in emergency preparedness.
- **Neighborhood Watch Program** — Now incorporates terrorism prevention and education into its existing crime prevention mission.
- **Public Safety Volunteers in Virginia** — Provides support for law enforcement, fire, rescue and emergency management, freeing up first responders for front line disaster duty.
- **Medical Reserve Corps** — Will coordinate health professional volunteers to assist emergency medical personnel in times of crisis.

Secondly, it links Virginians who wish to participate in the Commonwealth's homeland security and emergency preparedness effort with Virginia Citizen Corps volunteer opportunities in their community.

Virginia's Citizen Corps parallels President Bush's national Citizen Corps initiative, building a volunteer infrastructure to help make communities safer and better prepared through four basic volunteer programs. (See table above.)

These programs are implemented at the local level and designed to build on many programs already in place in Virginia's communities. The federal government will channel about \$300,000 in 2002 funds to support local CERT training programs, with a small portion of this funding going to the development of Citizen Corps Councils.

These community-based councils will provide organization, direction and support for each locality's Citizen Corps programs.



Stepping up to the plate. Gov. Mark Warner arrives at the South Portico of the Capitol to debut his Virginia Corps volunteerism initiative. (VDEM Photo by Bob Lambert.)

They will also link local Citizen Corps activities to the national effort and include leaders from a broad community spectrum including emergency management, law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services, businesses, volunteer and faith-based organizations, health care institutions and schools.

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KI distribution plan implemented

Under a recently approved state plan, local health departments are making potassium iodide (KI) tablets available to an estimated 330,000 citizens who live or work within 10 miles of the North Anna and Surry nuclear power stations.

The distribution plan, developed by VDEM in coordination with the Virginia Department of Health, calls for a single dose of KI to be offered to these individuals prior to an emergency.

The remainder of the 660,000-dose stockpile Virginia accepted from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is being stored for immediate distribution in the event of a nuclear accident.

While KI can offer the public an additional level of protection in a radiological emergency, it is not a substitute for standard response procedures.

"Should an actual nuclear power station emergency occur, we would put primary emphasis on either evacuation or sheltering in place, according to our established plan," says VDEM State Coordinator Michael Cline.

"Citizens would receive specific instructions for safeguarding themselves and their families through their local Emergency Alert System radio or TV station."



In the zone. Single doses of KI tablets are now available to those who live and work near the North Anna and Surry nuclear power stations. (VDEM Photo by Bob Lambert.)

Potassium iodide is a non-prescription medication that if taken in an appropriate and timely dosage, can block exposure to radioactive iodine, one of the contaminants that could be released in a nuclear accident or similar event. Exposure to radioactive iodine can increase the risk of thyroid cancer.

"Potassium iodide is most effective if taken within a few hours before, during, or immediately after exposure," says State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.

"The medication can help prevent thyroid cancer, especially in children. Children are more likely to develop thyroid cancer following exposure to radioactive iodine."

Citizens should store the medication so it is readily available should an emergency occur. People should not take potassium iodide unless the state health commissioner instructs them to do so during an emergency.

Those allergic to iodine should avoid taking potassium iodide. People with certain thyroid diseases, such as Grave's disease, thyroiditis, and goiter, and people with known skin diseases (dermatitis herpetiformis or hypocomplementemic vasculitis) should consult with their physicians before taking potassium iodide.

Local health departments are notifying people in their communities when and where they can voluntarily receive their free dose of potassium iodide. Proof of identification and residence will be necessary. (Scheduled clinics are listed on the Virginia Department of Health Web site at www.vdh.state.va.us.)

Citizens may also purchase KI tablets without a prescription through Anbex, Inc., (866) 463-6754, or online, www.anbex.com.



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In launching Virginia Corps, Warner singled out Arlington's Citizen Corps Council as a model for other localities interested in improving their preparedness.

Building on its plan used during the Pentagon attack, Arlington is expanding the role of citizen preparedness and other community-based responses.

"It is important for Arlington citizens to know how to take care of themselves, their families and their neighbors during times of crisis," said Arlington's County Board Chair Chris Zimmerman.

"This council will be promoting effective response techniques among residents and businesses, whether we're faced with tornadoes or terrorist threats."

As part of its effort, Arlington is piloting Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) classes for community members interested in how they can better prepare their homes, neighborhoods and work places for disasters.

Gov. Warner points to the "enormous generosity and kindness of our fellow citizens" who responded after Sept. 11 and notes that the spirit of neighbors helping neighbors already runs deep in Virginia. Some 3 million volunteers already contribute about \$16 billion worth of services and time per year.

"Our challenge today is to build on their work and to ensure that something positive can emerge from this horrible tragedy," Warner says. "I plan on personally rolling up my sleeves and getting involved in volunteer activities around the state."

"Virginia Corps and its component parts represent an extremely important priority for this administration. What we launch today is more than a Web site. It is a sustained partnership between the Commonwealth, localities and the volunteer and service community."

"It is a partnership under which we will do all we can in state government to promote the values of volunteerism and homeland security."

Visit the Virginia Corps volunteerism clearinghouse at www.virginiacorps.org. Information on VDEM training programs, including CERT, is available on our Web site at www.vaemergency.com.

VDEM News in Brief

Drought. Average water conservation savings (large public water supplies) of 6 to 12 percent have been reported since Gov. Mark Warner instituted mandatory water restrictions throughout most of the Commonwealth on Aug. 30. More details are available in the latest Drought Monitoring Task Force Report on the VDEM Web site at www.vaemergency.com/news.

Secure Virginia. Gov. Warner has accepted recommendations in 12 broad subject areas contained in the Secure Virginia Panel's second report released Sept. 5. First responder related proposals include funding for public-private information fusion (homeland security intelligence sharing) and strengthening incident management capabilities. Read the full report online at www.commonwealthpreparedness.state.va.us.



(VDEM Photo by George Roarty.)

Joining forces. North Carolina and Virginia responders test their ability to conduct joint operations in this CHER-CAP exercise in Danville.

CHER-CAPs cross the line

By Bob Lambert, Staff Writer

When a city bus “crashed” into a tanker carrying hazardous chemicals in Danville last month, first responders from 15 federal, state and local agencies converged on the accident scene in a textbook example of interstate, interjurisdictional cooperation.

The incident, which occurred near a bridge that splits the Virginia-North Carolina state line, came as no surprise to Danville Emergency Management Coordinator Doug Young. The scenario was all part of a Comprehensive Hazardous Materials Emergency Response-Capability Assessment Program (CHER-CAP) exercise.

Three days later, another incident took place in Bristol. This time it was a chemical spill. Like Danville, it too was an exercise. Both featured regional responses and interstate involvement and stand as Virginia’s only two CHER-CAP drills this year.

While the Bristol exercise focused exclusively on hazmat response, the Danville event added a new dimension to the incident by including a potential terrorist incident.

A year-and-a-half-ago, Young applied for a federal grant to conduct the simulation in which a disgruntled employee attempted to use a car loaded with explosives to destroy the bridge on an unfinished section of the Danville Expressway. Exercise participants encountered the suspicious vehicle as they arrived at the accident site.

In preparing for the Danville exercise, responders from each jurisdiction had similar concerns about crossing the state line and dealing with both a federal crime scene and a hazmat incident.

“When we got together beforehand, we all had the same questions,” Young says. “We soon found that every agency was focused on life safety and solving potential problems. Many of our goals were accomplished before the drill ever started.”

First responders had a chance to practice crime scene preservation, evacuation and transport of mass casualties to five nearby hospitals. Young says the CHER-CAP exercise was valuable because of the number of agencies taking part and the involvement of North Carolina authorities in an exercise that crosses a state line. In fact, the exercise was the first Virginia has conducted with a bordering state.

“This event allowed us to develop and enhance the interagency cooperation so critical to effective response operations,” Young says. “In a real-world situation, the first response teams would now be familiar with the procedures and used to working together.”

Get set to go to EPCO

VDEM’s second annual Emergency Preparedness Community Outreach Conference will be held Nov. 20 at the Wyndham Hotel Richmond Airport.

This free, one-day program with optional Nov. 19 pre-conference sessions is designed for emergency managers, community disaster educators and those interested in promoting community disaster preparedness.

General session topics include an overview of Citizen Corps and tips from media representatives on *How to Get the Media on Board for Your Campaign*. Participants will also hear Lt. Gov. Tim Kaine speak about *Preparing Virginia’s Citizens* for terrorism and other disasters and community disaster education guru, Rocky Lopes, share *How to Get People Beyond Denial*.

The program will also feature breakout sessions sharing helpful tips on reaching non-English speaking citizens and seniors as well as using the Web and printed publications to communicate public safety messages.

Roundtable discussions will offer participants a discussion forum on outreach issues to include partnerships, multiculturalism and the post-Sept. 11 world.

See www.vaemergency.com/train/calendar.cfm#epco for program details and registration materials (deadline October 31, 2002). For more information, contact Dawn Eischen at deischen@vdem.state.va.us or call 804-897-6510.



Vincent now at helm in VEOC

VDEM’s local government partners will now find a familiar face in the Virginia Emergency Operations Center director’s chair.

Deputy Operations Director **Fred Vincent** was promoted to operations director last month, succeeding Jim Dixon who left the agency in July.

A veteran of 18 presidentially declared disasters, Vincent joined the agency in 1989 and held positions as operations coordination branch chief, agency security officer, agency telecommunications coordinator and telecommunications branch chief.

He is a recognized expert on radio communications, serving as the VDEM representative to the State Agencies Radio System project and FCC Region 42 Coordination Committee and as the Commonwealth liaison to the federal Wireless Priority Access project.

He is also a member of the President’s Industry Advisory Council on what is now the Emergency Alert System (EAS), the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO), National Association of Search and Rescue (NASAR) and Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA).



Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Leadership and Influence

Oct. 9-11/Chesterfield

Decision Making in a Crisis

Oct. 22/Chesterfield

Effective Communication

Oct. 23-25/Chesterfield

Exercise Design & Evaluation

Nov. 5-7/Richmond

Mass Fatalities Incident Mgmt.

Nov. 12-14/Newport News

Coordinator's Briefing

Nov. 14/Williamsburg

Disaster Response and Recovery Operations

Nov. 18-19/Richmond

Radiological

Field Team Monitoring

Oct. 30/Chesterfield

Reservist Training

Decision Making Workshop

Oct. 17/Richmond

Community Relations Workshop

Oct. 22/Roanoke

Reservist Program Seminar

Nov. 20/Richmond

Search and Rescue

Incident Commander for Ground SAR

Oct. 18-20/Richmond

SAR Council

Oct. 26/Richmond

GSAR Institute (Part I)

Nov. 1-3/Front Royal

Managing Land for Search Operations (Part II)

Nov. 8-10/Charlottesville

Technological Hazards

Hazmat Technician

Oct. 14-25/Ashland

Public Safety Response to Terrorism (Tactical)

Nov. 2-3/South Hill

Nov. 21-22/Charlottesville

Advanced Tactical Control

Nov. 4-15/Ashland

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Want to learn more?

Visit the VDEM Web site at www.vaemergency.com/train to get the latest information about upcoming courses and schedules, PDS certification and other professional development opportunities.

Contact Sam Hoffman at shoffman@vdem.state.va.us or (804) 897-6500, ext. 6559, for more details on emergency management training.

PDS path to career development

The role of the emergency manager becomes ever more complex with population increases, economic growth and advances in information technology, as well as the threat of terrorism on the home front.

Only through constant study, training and professional development can today's emergency management professional acquire and polish the skills necessary to cope with the increasing array of hazards facing our communities and work places.

VDEM, other state agencies, the Emergency Management Institute and institutions of higher learning offer many training and education programs to assist in those preparations. Certification in the Professional Development Series (PDS) is a hallmark on the path to enhancing emergency management skills.

This set of seven training courses encompasses 136 classroom hours including the topics of leadership, communications, decision making, planning, developing volunteers, exercise design, and emergency management concepts and practices. VDEM schedules these courses to allow completion of all

'02 PDS Certifications

Richard O. Childress

Isle of Wight County

Kaye M. Harden

City of Charlottesville

James T. Judkins, Jr.

City of Suffolk

Lynda F. Price

Chesterfield County

Judith N. Riutort

York County

Charles S. Ross

New Kent County

John B. Anderson

Virginia Beach Fire Dept.

Gordon R. Barwell

VDEM

Robert M. Berry

R&T Associates

Suzen H. Collins

Piedmont Search and Rescue

Christine G. Greenleaf

ALSTOM

Charles E. Harris

Fairfax County (Public Works)

E. F. Sue Maddox-Toth &

Doretha A. Pair

VDOT

certification requirements in a two-year cycle.

PDS program participation has increased by more than 500 percent in the last three years and continues to grow. VDEM salutes the above individuals on this achievement and challenges each to continue pursuing emergency management excellence.



10501 Trade Court
Richmond, VA 23236-3713

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State Coordinator ... Michael M. Cline
Executive Editor Janet L. Clements
Managing Editor Barbara B. Bowen
Staff Writer Robert P. Lambert

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